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Bangalore Mirror

TEMP Max 30 | Min 15 | Humidity 80% Mainly Clear sky Sensex 83,674 | Nifty 25,807 | G…1,58,400 | Silver 2,95,000 | Dollar 90.59 | Euro 107.84 | GBP 123.35

CITY / PAGE 5

DOUBLE TROUBLE

Centre rejects ambitious Sarjapur to Hebbal Metro corridor, raising objections to proposed double decker design

SPORTS / PAGE 7

OUT OF THE PARK

Ishan, Pandya fifties help India put up challenging total as Namibia falls; historic cricket win for Italy and Sri Lanka races past Oman

Data presented in Parliament reveals public sector banks have made Rs 17,251.41 crore in 5 financial years towards penalties and service charges — minimum balance defaulters contribute big chunk

LAUGHING ALL THE WAY FROM THE BANK

Shockingly, banks earned Rs 1,044.32 crore from just SMS alerts in 2020-21

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Those customers, who failed to maintain adequate balance in their savings accounts, have effectively delivered around Rs 17,251.41 crore (in five financial years across India) in revenue to public sector banks over the last five years. Data placed before Parliament by the Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary, shows that charges for minimum balance shortfall, ATM usage and SMS alerts together have quietly built a massive income stream from routine banking transactions.

The largest chunk of this revenue has come from penalties imposed on customers who could not maintain the required minimum balance. As per data shared by Chaudhary, banks earned Rs 1,637.41 crore from minimum balance shortfall in 2020-21. This rose to Rs 1,805.75 crore in 2021-22 and further to Rs 2,294.68 crore in 2022-23. The figure spiked to Rs 2,909.10 crore in 2023-24 and remained high at Rs 2,889.05 crore in 2024-25. In five years, minimum balance penalties alone added up to over Rs 11,500 crore.

SMS income

On the other hands, SMS alert charges, often seen as a small recurring deduction, have emerged as

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 »

“Banks keep talking about inclusion and convenience, but the data shows they are minting thousands of crores just because people like us cannot always keep money idle in our accounts. For someone living month to month, these penalties feel less like charges and more like punishment

—Ramesh Kumar, private sector employee

STRIKE HARD

As workers gather to protest against new labour codes, police don’t hold back while attempting to break it up

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Bengaluru witnessed tense scenes on Thursday as police detained scores of trade union members and workers, who had gathered near Town Hall to participate in a nationwide general strike against the Centre’s four labour codes. The protest, organised by a joint platform of central trade unions, drew participation from workers across sectors.

The demonstration began in the morning, with workers assembling in large numbers at Town Hall, raising slogans and carrying placards condemning the implementation of the four new labour codes. Union leaders addressed the gathering, accusing the government of diluting hard-won labour protections and weakening collective bargaining mechanisms. Protesters argued that the new codes would make it easier for employers to hire and fire workers, curb the right to strike and reduce safeguards related to working conditions and wages, and urged for reinstatement of MGNREGA.

As the crowd swelled and attempted to hold a rally in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 »

THINGS TO DO

01 Game on

SOCIAL is set to host a Board Buddies game night, bringing players together over classic and contemporary board games for a relaxed and easy-going evening. **Where: Nagavara SOCIAL; When: February 13, 7 pm onwards**

02 Craft zone

A Hundred Hands, a handmade movement rooted in livelihood, equity, and craft integrity, with a single-minded focus on handcrafted work alone, is bringing the Festival of Handmade. **Where: NIFT Campus, HSR Layout; When: Until February 15, 11 am to 8 pm**

03 Music and chill

Vocalist and songwriter Violetta Parisini, known for creating music that speaks across language through vulnerability, lyricism, and depth, will be performing live with her band. **Where: Windmills Craftworks, Whitefield; When: February 13 and 14, 9.30 pm**

04 Antique allure

Mumbai-based Todywalla Auctions are presenting a preview show of soon to be auctioned artworks on display, showcasing the best of Indian Art, distinguished by material excellence, refined craftsmanship and historical depth. **Where: Bangalore International Centre (BIC), Domlur; When: Feb 13 from 2 pm to 7 pm, February 14, 15 from 10 am to 7 pm**

05 Tune in

Mizoram's electrifying band Evenflow will be bringing raw rock energy and soulful blues in their performance at BLR Airport. **Where: The Quad by BLR, Terminal 1; When: February 13, 7 pm**

Chinnaswamy Stadium gets nod for cricket matches

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar stated that the government has granted permission to conduct cricket matches at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in the interest of youth and the sport of cricket. Shivakumar responded to questions from the media at Vidhana Soudha on Thursday.

When asked about the Cabinet meeting, he said, "Permission has been granted on the condition that tickets should be sold only according to the stadium's seating capacity. Adequate safety measures must be taken in line with the recommendations of Cunha's report, including installation of large gates based on crowd requirements and deployment of ambulances." **— BMB**

Six years minimum now mandatory for Class 1

Education Department enforces strict six-year cutoff for admission to State schools, ensuring uniformity with national standards while supporting age-appropriate learning

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Some argue current cut-off is too rigid, noting that many children miss admission by just few days

After four years of back and forth, the state government has drawn a firm line on the minimum age for Class 1 admissions. From the 2026-27 academic year, parents will have to fall in line with the rule that mandates children must have completed six years of age as on June 1 to secure admission in State syllabus schools.

The School Education Department has made it clear that no further relaxation will be granted. The decision effectively ends the temporary concessions

Relaxations were provided for three academic cycles keeping practical difficulties in mind, but from 2026-27, rule will apply without exception, says senior official

that had been extended since 2022, when the State softened the rule amid concerns from parents and schools adjusting to new policy changes.

A senior official said the department had already signalled its intent last year. "The government order on the six-year age criterion was issued four years ago. Relaxations were provided for three academic cycles keeping practical difficulties in mind. From 2026-27, the rule will apply without exception," he said. While Central syllabus schools adopted the six-year benchmark in 2022 itself, the state government had initially provided a two-year cushion for State board institutions. In 2025-26, the minimum age was reduced to 5.5 years as a one-time measure. That window now closes.

Mixed reactions

The announcement has triggered mixed responses among parents in Bengaluru. Some say the clarity helps them plan better. "At least now there is no confusion. Every year we were unsure whether the rule would change again. A fixed age gives us certainty," said Priya Gowda, mother of a five-year-old. Others feel the June 1 cut-off is too rigid. "My son was born on June 3. Under this rule, he loses a full year. Two days should not decide a child's academic future," said IT professional Karthik S. Another parent, Shabana Ali, questioned the scientific basis of the deadline. "Children develop at different speeds. Instead of a strict date, there could have been some flexibility. Many families are affected by just a few days' difference," she said, adding that a grace period till the end of July would have been more practical. "The present cut-off may delay school entry unnecessarily," she said.

Policy alignment

Officials, however, maintain that aligning with the six-year benchmark ensures uniformity with national standards and supports age-appropriate learning. The department argues that repeated relaxations created inconsistency and confusion among schools. With admissions for 2026-27 set to begin in the coming months, schools across Bengaluru are preparing to implement the rule strictly. For many parents, the debate may not be over, but the message from the government is clear: the six-year age bar is here to stay.

Bangalore Mirror
Government eases class 1 admission age

Bangalore Mirror published a story 'Government eases Class 1 admission age' on April 17, 2025, narrating how govt had lowered minimum age criteria in response to parental concerns

Journey to gold through persistence and grit

Abhishek Khandekar, who won gold medal at the WAKO International Kickboxing Cup 2026

Balancing night shifts in Bengaluru with gruelling training sessions, 26-year-old Abhishek Khandekar has carved an inspiring journey in Indian kickboxing. He recently clinched gold at the WAKO International Kickboxing Cup 2026, marking his fifth international title and adding to the many medals he has won. Born in Korba, Chhattisgarh, Khandekar's interest with martial arts began in Class 9 after watching the movie The Karate Kid. What started as curiosity soon transformed into passion.

"Coming from a small district with limited exposure and facilities, the journey was far from easy. I steadily progressed through state and national-level competitions, building confidence one tournament at a time," he said. Over the years, he went on to represent India internationally, including winning two bronze medals at the 9th Diamond World Cup Kickboxing Championship in Anapa, Russia, in 2018. He is also a four-time national champion and holds a black belt in Taekwondo. Winning his fifth international title, however, came with a different kind of challenge, he said. So far, he has secured 20 medals spanning national, state and international levels.

Based in HSR Layout in Bengaluru, for the past six years, Khandekar manages night shifts alongside intense training schedules, often sacrificing sleep and recovery. "There were sleepless nights and difficult recovery periods. Managing work and training together was one of my biggest challenges. But my family's support and my coach's guidance kept me going. Every setback made me mentally stronger," he said.

His training routine is rigorous and disciplined. Mornings are dedicated to strength and conditioning, including weight training and core workouts. Afternoons and evenings focus on technical sessions, kicks, combinations and sparring. He rotates between MMA, boxing and kickboxing classes, training nearly four hours daily, along with high-intensity interval workouts, cardio sessions, flexibility drills and strict diet plans.

"For this tournament, I worked on speed, counter-attack techniques and ring control. Mental visualisation before matches helped me stay calm under pressure," he explained.

Looking ahead, Khandekar has set his sights higher. "My next goals are the Asian Championships, World Championships and one day, the Olympics," he said. **— Iffath Fathima**

Heist and seek ends in court

The Siddapura Police have filed a 1,328-page charge sheet in connection with a sensational dacoity case involving the theft of ₹7.11 crore, three months after the incident.

According to the police, the case was registered within the Siddapura Police Station limits on November 19, thoroughly investigated, and the final report has now been submitted before the 56th ACMM CCH Court. Nine accused persons have been named in the charge sheet for their alleged involvement in the carefully planned robbery.

Police said the accused executed a meticulously planned robbery, targeting a large cash consignment and fleeing with ₹7.11 crore. The incident triggered widespread concern due to the scale of the loot and the organised manner in which the crime was carried out.

Police officials compiled substantial evidence to support the prosecution. The case file contains 129 pieces of evidence, including eyewitness statements, technical and digital records, and forensic findings such as fingerprint analysis linking the accused to the crime scene. The accused have been booked under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, for dacoity, wrongful restraint and confinement, criminal conspiracy, intimidation, and destruction of evidence. **–BMB**

Van-ished? No, just skipping school!

In an unusual incident, two sisters from Bengaluru staged a kidnapping story to avoid attending school, prompting concern among their family and police intervention. The girls, aged 14 and eight, left for school in Chamarajpet on Monday morning but did not attend classes.

According to police, they left home at 8.20 am but disappeared soon after being dropped off. When their grandfather visited the school, teachers confirmed they had not reported to class, triggering panic within the family.

The younger sister later called her father using a stranger's phone, claiming that masked men had injected them and forced them into a van. Alarmed, the family approached the Chamarajpet police station and filed a complaint. Officers began an immediate search.

However, the CCTV footage showed the girls at a nearby shop, where they had stopped for lassi. When questioned, they admitted to fabricating the story to avoid school. Police said the children appeared reluctant to attend classes and had invented the abduction claim out of fear of being reprimanded.

No harm was reported. Police chose not to register a case and advised the parents to seek counselling and address the issue constructively.

The incident highlights the need for supportive engagement to help children cope with academic pressure. **–BMB**

Latte trouble leads to suspension

Three police personnel attached to the BIAL Police Station were suspended on Thursday following allegations of assaulting a staff member and misconduct over a coffee bill at a private canteen operating inside the Kempegowda International Airport premises.

According to a complaint filed by Ajitsumar, manager of the Alpha Billing canteen, the incident occurred around 12.30 am on February 11. The canteen functions round the clock to cater to airport staff and workers, offering meals at subsidised rates.

The complainant alleged that three police officials — Gangaraju, Balappa and Kumar — entered the canteen during duty hours and assaulted staff after a worker asked them to obtain a coffee token as per procedure. Other employees who intervened were also allegedly beaten. The officers reportedly shut the canteen before closing time and threatened the staff.

The injured workers were treated at Devanahalli Hospital. Following a preliminary inquiry, the DCP (North-East) suspended the three officials and ordered a departmental probe. Further investigation is underway. **–BMB**

Sweet deal turns sour at KIA

Customs officials at Kempegowda International Airport seized two separate consignments of narcotic substances from passengers arriving from Bangkok on February 11, 2026, Uncovering drugs worth over ₹3.4 crore in successive operations. In the first case, officers seized 1.7 kg of hashish worth ₹4.25 lakh concealed in sweet packets during routine screening. In a second case, larger haul the same day, Customs recovered 9.7 kg of hydroponic ganja valued at ₹3.39 crore from a passenger's checked-in baggage. Both passengers were arrested under the NDPS Act, 1985, and investigations are ongoing. **–BMB**

Techie dies in bike crash

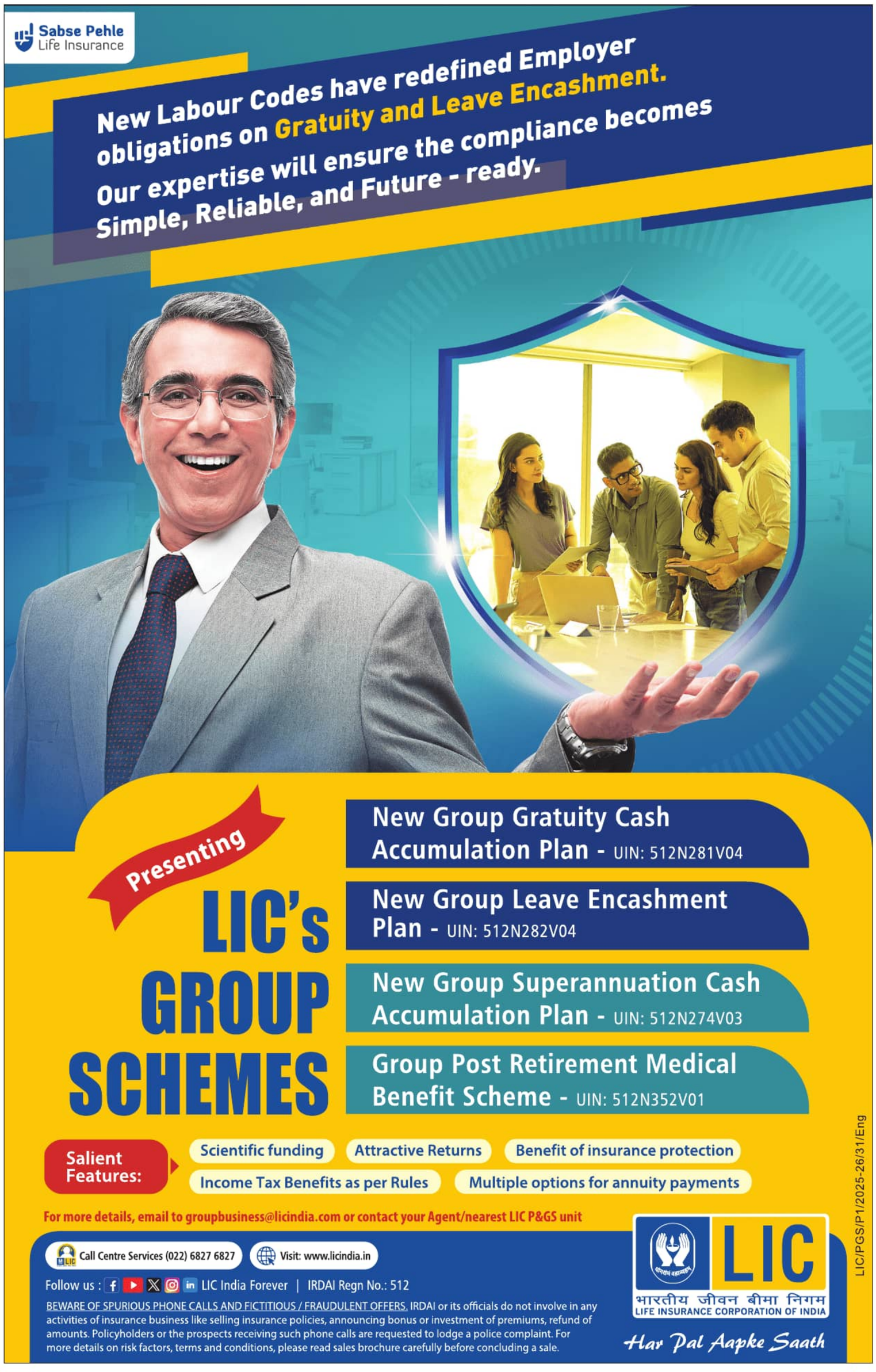
A late-night speeding incident claimed the life of a 22-year-old techie and left another seriously injured after their motorbike crashed into a villa compound wall in Bellandur in the early hours of Thursday. The accident occurred between 2 am and 2.30 am near Ozone Apartments, Bellandur. Varshith and Vikas Bhat, allegedly speeding, missed a left turn and crashed into a villa compound wall. Varshith died on the spot with severe head injuries, while Vikas sustained multiple fractures and is under treatment. Police suspect over speeding. A case has been registered, and investigations are ongoing. **–BMB**

Lavish lives, Lokayukta arrives

The Karnataka Lokayukta Police recovered over ₹2.15 crore in unaccounted cash during simultaneous raids conducted on Thursday against four government officers accused of amassing assets disproportionate to their known sources of income. Searches were carried out at more than 29 locations, including the residences, offices and properties of the accused across Bengaluru City, Bengaluru Rural, Davanagere and Dharwad.

Raids were conducted at properties linked to the accused officers and their relatives, uncovering assets allegedly disproportionate to their income.

In Bengaluru City, searches at 14 locations linked to PWD Executive Engineer Purushotham Das Hegade revealed assets worth ₹12.84 crore. In Bengaluru Rural, Superintendent Engineer HM Janardhana allegedly possessed assets worth ₹5.77 crore. Arjun RH of BESCOM and Survey Supervisor Somalingappa FS allegedly owned assets worth ₹2.49 crore and ₹2.64 crore, respectively. Separate DA cases have been registered, and investigations are ongoing. **–BMB**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Smells like trouble near HAL gate

Residents blame foul industrial discharge into roadside drain near Gate 30, disrupting daily morning routines

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Left: A board put up by the HAL along the roadside drain; Right: Stagnated effluents and the condition of the drain along the entry road of HAL Airport

Walkers allege diesel-like fumes from stagnant waste threaten public health, as authorities promise action amid mounting community outrage

Hundreds of residents from Konena Agrahara, Air View Colony and surrounding areas prefer to walk along the entry road to HAL Airport as it is free from vehicular traffic and has remained largely pollution-free over the years. However, residents now find it difficult to use the road for their morning walks due to a foul odour emanating from effluents allegedly discharged into a drain adjacent to HAL Gate No. 30.

Residents complain that they are unable to walk along the road because of stagnant effluents in the roadside drain. "I have been coming here for my morning walk for several years. More than 100 people use this road for a walk every day. We have had no problems all these years, but we are now finding it difficult to walk here due to the foul odour from the roadside drain. The air smells of diesel. No one seems bothered about keeping this place clean, except during a VVIP visit," said A Shivakumar, a resident of Konena Agrahara.

Expressing a similar view, Jayakumar, former president of the HAL 3rd Stage Residents' Welfare Association, said the road is an ideal spot for residents, especially senior citizens, to go for a walk. "We noticed dirty and polluted water, along with effluents in the drain, which smelled of diesel. Initially, we thought it was diesel. Later, we found that effluents were being discharged into the drain from one of HAL's units. I urge the HAL authorities to take measures to keep the drain clean for the benefit of the hundreds of people who come here for a walk," he said.

Describing the situation as a serious health hazard, another resident, speaking on condition of anonymity, said factories cannot dispose of effluents openly into drains used daily by pedestrians and walkers. "It is dangerous for public health, especially with an Air Force colony right opposite, putting families at risk. While the Air Force side is clean, the HAL side remains clogged with leaves and garbage and is neither cleaned nor maintained," the resident added.

It is ironic that several boards have been put up by HAL along the footpath adjacent to the drain allegedly filled with effluents from a nearby HAL unit. The boards read: "Cleanliness is next to Godliness" and "A Clean Place is a Safe Place."

Meanwhile, the HAL Public Relations Officer said he had already informed the department concerned about the issue. "The department concerned will take measures to resolve the problem if it falls under its jurisdiction," the PRO said.

Flex it? Forget it, say citizens

Activists seek police protection to rip down illegal political hoardings disfiguring Bengaluru's roads and neighbourhoods

NGO warns banners endanger riders and pedestrians, gives authorities one week before launching citywide removal drive regardless

To make Bengaluru flex-free, a city-based organisation is initiating a movement to tear down illegal flex banners and posters that are ruining the city's beauty. To achieve this, the group has approached the Bengaluru City Police (BCP) seeking protection during the campaign.

In a letter to the Police Commissioner, the group has requested police protection for members of the organisation and other volunteers who will be part of the initiative.

According to Naijya Horatagarara Vedike, the NGO spearheading the movement, flex banners featuring political leaders are scattered across the city. These not only compromise Bengaluru's aesthetics but also pose a significant risk to two-wheeler riders and pedestrians.

"We have requested permission so that we can safely take down illegal banners. We have also written to the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), highlighting the issue, which has persisted for years. However, if it is not possible for the BCP to protect our activists and volunteers, we request the GBA and the BCP to conduct a swift operation, on a war footing, to clear all flex banners from the city's streets," said HM Venkatesh, a social activist.

Members of the group say they will await a response from the BCP and the GBA for a week before proceeding with the initiative regardless. "We will wait for a week for a response from the GBA and the BCP. Either way, we will proceed with the initiative to free Bengaluru's streets of illegal flex banners," said another member. Vedike members highlighted that posters and banners placed in public spaces without permission violate the Karnataka Open Places (Prevention of Disfigurement) Act, 1981. Moreover, the Karnataka High Court has issued numerous directions in the past to clear all flex banners in the city. A contempt of court petition is currently at the hearing stage due to the authorities' failure to implement these orders.

According to the Vedike, following the High Court's orders, BCP and GBA (then BBMP) officials held joint meetings and resolved to conduct coordinated operations to remove flex banners. As per the minutes of those meetings, which were also submitted to the Court, it was decided that officials would conduct joint night patrols, seize vehicles involved in installing banners, and arrest those responsible.

Activists say the initiative is necessary because authorities have so far appeared ineffective in tackling the issue.

"The authorities' failure to enforce the rules is evident from the fact that the banners remain visible throughout the city. These banners pose a significant risk to the lives of two-wheeler riders and pedestrians. Therefore, it is the duty of the GBA to launch a swift operation to remove them and protect both the city's beauty and the lives of its citizens," added Venkatesh. — BMB

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Unsafe walkway
Hayes Road

The footpath near the Mysore Saree Udyog construction site at the entrance to 2nd Cross, Hayes Road, Ward 111, is dangerously unsafe for pedestrians.

Shell dumping
Residency Road

A coconut vendor is encroaching on and blocking the footpath on Residency Road, Ward 111, by dumping coconut shells, thereby affecting pedestrian safety and requiring immediate action by the authorities.

Missing slabs
Marathahalli

Slabs are missing near the Marathahalli market, posing a serious safety risk to pedestrians using the footpath.

'Suspicion alone cannot sustain bigamy accusation'

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The Karnataka High Court on Thursday set aside the charge of bigamy under Section 494 of the Indian Penal Code against a woman alleged to be the second wife of a man, holding that she cannot be prosecuted on the basis of mere suspicion. The complaint had been filed by the man's first wife.

Justice M Nagaprasanna was hearing a petition filed by the husband, his family members, and the alleged second wife seeking to quash an FIR registered at the instance of the first wife. In June last year, the High Court had stayed further investigation in the matter.

According to the case records, the complainant and the husband were married on May 20, 2021. After marital discord, the couple approached a family court and agreed to reconcile. However, the reunion did not materialise. In 2024, the husband filed for divorce. The complainant subsequently lodged multiple complaints, with the present FIR being the third. Police later filed a chargesheet, prompting the accused to move the High Court.

Examining the material on record, the judge said, "If complaint and summary of chargesheet are juxtaposed what would unmistakably emerge is that offence of bigamy against the petitioner no 1 that he got married to accused no 7 springs on suspicion."

Though the complainant relied on photographs allegedly showing a temple wedding, the court found that the photographs nowhere depict any marriage being held.

Referring to an earlier decision of a coordinate bench, the court reiterated that an alleged second wife cannot automatically be made an accused under Section 494 IPC.

The High Court held that there were no specific allegations of cruelty or dowry demand against the husband's family members. Consequently, it quashed proceedings under Section 498A and other invoked provisions against accused no 2 to 10, including the alleged second wife.

However, the court found that the allegations against the husband under Sections 494 and 498A IPC, as well as Sections 3 and 4 of the Dowry Prohibition Act, warranted a trial.

It clarified that if the prosecution succeeds in establishing during trial that a second marriage did take place, it would be open to seek inclusion of the alleged second wife in the proceedings. The petition was thus partly allowed.

Lender barred from obstructing investigation

The Karnataka High Court has ruled that a finance company which grants loans against pledged gold cannot use its contractual security interest to obstruct a criminal investigation or override the rights of the true owner if the gold is found to be stolen.

Justice Suraj Govindraj dismissed a petition filed by IIFL Finance Limited challenging a notice issued by police under Section 94 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). The notice directed the company to produce records and gold articles pledged with it in connection with a theft case.

The case stems from allegations against a Customer Service Officer and Jewellery Loan Officer at Karur Vysya Bank. During a surprise reappraisal of gold loan accounts handled by the employee, serious irregularities were allegedly discovered. She is accused of removing genuine gold ornaments pledged by customers and replacing them with fake articles, amounting to theft and criminal breach of trust.

The court said the gold articles allegedly stolen clearly fall within the expression "other thing" under Section 94. The details sought by investigators — including pledge records and CCTV footage — were directly relevant to determining whether gold pledged with the company matched the stolen ornaments and could not be termed excessive.

The judge further held that failure to produce the gold would render the investigation ineffective, as identity and chain of custody cannot be established through documents alone. A Section 94 notice, the court clarified, merely facilitates investigation and does not by itself amount to seizure or adjudication of ownership rights.

Importantly, the court held that even if a contractual security interest exists, it cannot override the superior claim of the true owner of stolen property. Finding no merit in the challenge, the High Court dismissed the petition.

Red light for Red Line: Centre halts metro project over design concerns

Centre sends back DPR for Red Line corridor for reconsideration due to blanket double decker model across entire stretch, flagging risk of reduction in metro ridership

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Bengaluru's ambitious Sarjapur to Hebbal Metro corridor has run into fresh trouble, with the Centre refusing to clear the project in its current form and raising objections to the proposed double decker design. The move has triggered a political and administrative face-off, coming close on the heels of the recent metro fare hike debate in the city.

The 37 km Red Line corridor, planned with 28 stations, carries an estimated cost of Rs 28,405 crore. However, the Detailed Project Report has now been sent back for reconsideration. Bengaluru Central MP PC Mohan said, "Karnataka's blanket double-decker rule has stalled Centre's approval for the Rs 28,405 crore Hebbal–Sarjapur Metro corridor. MoHUA cautions that full-length road and metro stretches weaken mass transit gains. BMRCL must revisit the design and justify viability to secure approval. A double-decker may be justified at select junctions. But extending it across an entire corridor risks creating parallel infrastructure, encouraging private vehicle use, reducing metro ridership, and weakening anticipated social benefits including lower congestion and pollution."

Under the double decker model, metro viaducts would run above elevated road corridors in select stretches. The State had argued that such a design would ease traffic congestion and allow faster execution without acquiring additional land. But the Centre believes the model could impact metro ridership and weaken the project's economic sustainability. A senior official familiar with the discussions said, "The concern is that if road capacity is expanded simultaneously, private vehicle usage may increase, which could affect projected metro passenger numbers."

Concerns have been raised over possible increase in private vehicle usage affecting projected metro passenger numbers

Centre has reportedly declined blanket approval and suggested that double decker structures may be considered only at select junctions rather than across entire stretch

Design dispute

The state government had proposed extending the double decker format to several upcoming corridors, projecting it as an integrated urban mobility solution. However, the Centre has reportedly declined blanket approval and suggested that such structures may be considered only at select junctions rather than across the entire stretch. This is not the first time the project has faced scrutiny. Earlier too, the DPR was returned citing escalation in estimated costs. The renewed objections have now added to uncertainty around timelines.

Urban mobility experts are divided. "Double decker structures can optimise limited road space in a dense city like Bengaluru," said a transport planner, adding that if financial projections do not justify the investment, the Centre is bound to seek clarity. For the state government and BMRCL, the development comes as a setback at a time when commuter sentiment is already sensitive following the fare hike.

MLA Byrathi Basavaraj arrested in murder case

After eight months, BJP MLA Byrathi Basavaraj (64) who represents the KR Puram constituency, was arrested by the Karnataka Crime Investigation Department (CID) on Thursday at Kempegowda International Airport shortly after he arrived from Ahmedabad around 7.15 pm in connection with a murder case linked to a real estate dispute.

Basavaraj has been listed as accused number five in the murder case of real estate operative VG Shivaprakash alias Bikla Shiva, 44, who was killed on July 15, 2025. According to police, the arrest comes shortly after the Supreme Court declined to entertain his anticipatory bail plea. Earlier, the Karnataka High Court had rejected his bail application on February 10. Following this, the CID had issued a lookout notice for Basavaraj.

The police, who learnt about his travel back to Bengaluru, were waiting for his arrival at Terminal-1. Following his arrest, Basavaraj was taken into custody for further questioning. Officials said he will be produced before the special court designated for elected representatives on Friday. **–BMB**

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Solid waste mismanagement alarms CPCB in Karnataka

CPCB report ranks Karnataka among bottom five states in solid waste management, with thousands of tonnes generated daily remaining untreated and dumped in landfills or open sites

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TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

Decentralised composting seen as sustainable way forward

Karnataka is among the worst states in the country when it comes to solid waste management. A recent report by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) shows that the state is on the list of the bottom five states with a large amount of solid waste being left unattended. The only states with more than this amount being unattended are Bihar, Haryana, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh.

By March 2023, Karnataka was generating 12,140 tonnes of solid waste per day. Out of this, while 12,123 tonnes is collected, only 6,587 tonnes of this waste is treated, as much as 3,405 tonnes reaches landfills, and a whopping 2,148 tonnes is dumped in the open. The percent treatment of waste in Karnataka is much lower than the national average of 61 percent.

"As much as a 12 percent gap in segregation of solid waste exists in urban local bodies, while a 45 percent gap exists in GBA (erstwhile BBMP) limits. The solid waste processing facilities include 188 composting, 73 vermi-composting, and 13 biogas plants. One RDF unit is under the commissioning stage. A total of 182 landfills are operational in the State," CPCB has noted in the report.

As per the report, Karnataka also boasts a significant number of dumpsites. This is mainly due to the absence of adequate, scientifically designed sanitary landfills for waste disposal. While the maximum number of dumpsites is in Tamil Nadu (271), Karnataka, with 201 such sites, is not far behind.

Karnataka has a significant number of dumpsites, largely due to the absence of adequate, scientifically designed sanitary landfills. While Tamil Nadu leads with 271 sites, Karnataka follows closely with 201

Notably, disposal of waste through an open dumpsite is not an approved system. Given the scenario, local bodies along with the state government should introduce systems that will ensure processing, treatment, and disposal through an approved system while also reclaiming the areas under the existing dumpsites, the Central Pollution Control Board has noted. Open dumping must be phased out and replaced with engineered sanitary landfills for residual waste.

As per the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules of 2016, local bodies are required to obtain authorisation from the concerned state pollution control boards for setting up a waste processing, treatment, or disposal facility, if the volume of waste exceeds five metric tons per day. As per the recent report by CPCB, Karnataka currently has 11 authorized facilities, and 11 new facilities are in the process of authorization. In-situ composting, biomethanation, and other localized waste processing methods at household, community, and institutional levels are the way forward, says the report. It also underlines that local bodies should mandate bulk waste generators like institutions, apartments, and hotels to manage their waste at source.

Costly rides push transport corporations into red

Karnataka's four State-run transport corporations are facing mounting financial strain as operating costs continue to exceed revenue. Across KSRTC, BMTC, NWKRTC and KKRTC, more than 25,900 buses run daily within and outside the State. Although the Shakti free travel scheme has increased women's ridership four to five times and boosted overall passenger numbers, earnings remain insufficient to meet rising fuel and maintenance expenses.

Officials estimate operational costs at around Rs 50 per kilometre, including diesel, tyres and upkeep. Express services generate only Rs 45 to 47 per km, leading to a deficit of Rs 3 to 5, while ordinary city and rural buses earn merely Rs 30 to 35 per km, resulting in a shortfall of Rs 15 to 20. Nearly 30 percent of buses operate at a complete loss, another 30 percent break even, and only 40 percent turn a profit. On average, a KSRTC bus earns Rs 19.57 lakh per month but spends Rs 22.97 lakh. BMTC records Rs 11.92 lakh revenue against Rs 19.56 lakh expenditure per bus, while NWKRTC and KKRTC also report significant gaps. Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy acknowledged bridging the cost-revenue gap remains a challenge. — BMB

'All charges board-approved and per RBI instructions'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

another major contributor. According to the Minister's reply in Parliament, banks earned Rs 1,044.32 crore from SMS alerts in 2020-21, which increased to Rs 1,282.03 crore in 2021-22. Collections stood at Rs 1,193.19 crore in 2022-23, dipped to Rs 977.28 crore in 2023-24 and rose again to Rs 1,218.60 crore in 2024-25. Over the five-year period, SMS alerts alone generated more than Rs 5,700 crore.

ATM charges

ATM-related charges, including fees for cash withdrawals beyond free limits, continue to impact customers, even though the net figures reflect interchange costs between banks. Data attributed to Chaudhary shows a net impact of minus Rs 416.68 crore in 2020-21, minus Rs 507.49 crore in 2021-22 and minus Rs 451.46 crore in 2022-23. The net figure fell further to minus Rs 594.12 crore in 2023-24 and minus Rs 647.32 crore in 2024-25. Despite this, customers pay per-transaction charges once free limits are crossed.

Responding to Parliament, Chaudhary said the levy of service charges by banks, including those for non-maintenance of minimum balance, ATM usage and SMS alerts, is governed by Board-approved policies and Reserve Bank of India instructions. "Such charges have to be reasonable, transparent and aligned with the cost of providing the services," he said. He also highlighted the availability of zero-balance accounts such as Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts and those opened under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, which offer basic banking services without penal charges.

Customers' concern

"Banks keep talking about inclusion and convenience, but the data shows they are minting thousands of crores just because people like us cannot always keep money idle in our accounts. For someone living month to month, these penalties feel less like charges and more like punishment," said Ramesh Kumar, a private sector employee. Another employee Rama Devi added, "I was shocked to see that even SMS alerts have earned banks over Rs 5,700 crore. These are not premium services, they are basic necessities. Customers are paying silently every month without realising how big this money has become for banks."

Participation from workers across sectors

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

central business district, police personnel moved in to disperse the gathering, citing concerns over public order and traffic disruption. Officers began detaining demonstrators and escorting them to waiting buses. Several protesters were seen being taken away in Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) buses to designated locations, including Freedom Park and the City Armed Reserve grounds in Adugodi. Despite being removed from the protest site, union members continued their agitation at the locations where they were held. They staged sit-ins, chanted slogans and reiterated their demands, asserting that the nationwide strike reflected deep dissatisfaction among workers across the country.

The strike in Bengaluru was part of a larger call for industrial action issued by major trade union federations, including the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), All India United Trade Union Centre (AIUTUC), and the

All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU), among others. Under the banner of Karnataka IT/ITeS Employees Union (KITU), IT employees also participated in the protest near Town Hall.

The unions have collectively opposed the new labour framework, alleging that it prioritises corporate interests over workers' rights. In addition to the gathering at Town Hall, workers in several industrial clusters on the outskirts of Bengaluru — including Bommasandra, Jigani, Hoskote, Doddaballapura and Whitefield — also participated in the strike. Union representatives claimed that attendance was affected in certain factories and industrial units, with employees either abstaining from work or joining protest marches organised in their respective areas. The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) stated that nearly six lakh workers across Karnataka participated in the strike. Those who joined the protest included factory workers, anganawadi staff, Aksharadasoha and gram panchayat employees, construction workers, porters, municipal staff, and contractual and outsourced employees from different sectors.

"Workers in several manufacturing units in the State's industrial cities such as Mysuru, Tumakuru, Belagavi, Kalaburagi and Raichur participated in the strike. The strike was successful in automobile, vehicle spare parts manufacturing, electronics, textile, pharma, tire and power generation units... In addition more than 1,000 employees of the State-owned Hatti gold mine in Raichur protested by blocking the road for an hour," it said. The union also claimed that Hoskote taluk in Bengaluru Rural witnessed a complete shutdown. However, in Bengaluru Urban, the strike had little visible impact apart from protests staged near Town Hall.

"By cracking down on peaceful protesters, the Congress government in Karnataka is displaying its undemocratic character and hostility toward working-class struggles. We strongly condemn this repression," said KITU in a statement.

Hardik Pandya crowned man of the match for his all-round performance

Namibia struggle to match India's strong show

India proved to be too strong for Namibia as the fancied hosts crushed their opponents by 93 runs in a T20 World Cup match here on Thursday.Opener Ishan Kishan and all-rounder Hardik Pandya struck belligerent half-centuries to power India to 209 for nine after being asked to bat first.

Ishan blazed away to a blistering 24-ball 61, and Pandya smashed 52 off 28 balls while sharing a partnership of 81 runs for the fifth wicket with Shivam Dube (23 off 16 balls).

Using plenty of variations, Namibia skipper Gerhard Erasmus returned excellent figures of 4/20 from four overs.

In reply, Namibia were bowled out at 116 in 18.2 overs. While some of the Namibian batters got starts, they could not translate them into big knocks.

Spinner Varun Chakravarthy ended with fine figures of 3/7 in 2 overs. Earlier, India crossed 100 in the seventh over with Ishan looking in imperious touch while reaching his 50 in just 20 balls.

India, however, lost five wickets for just four runs towards the end. This was India's second successive win in the tournament.

1. Namibia's Jan Frylinck walks as India's Arshdeep Singh celebrates taking his wicket; 2. India's Ishan Kishan and Tilak Varma during the match between India and Namibia at the Arun Jaitley Stadium, in New Delhi on Thursday

India
209/9
(20)

Namibia
116
(18.2)

Today's match

Australia V/S Zimbabwe
11.00 am

Canada V/S United Arab Emirates
03.00 pm

USA V/S Netherlands
07.00 pm

Indian innings highlights

Kishan blazed his way to 61 off 24 balls while Pandya contributed 52 off 28 balls, but Erasmus used his unorthodox slingy deliveries to restrict the damage done by the Indian batting line-up on a pitch which gripped a little for the spinners. India raced to 104/1 in just seven overs, with Kishan particularly brutal against the pace bowlers before falling to the first ball of spin from Erasmus.

He and Bernard Scholtz created a stranglehold through the middle overs. Though Pandya fought back with a late fifty, India lost five wickets in the last two overs, and Namibia will be satisfied with pulling things back from a position where India threatened to post a much larger total.

India's innings began with Ruben Trumpelmann testing Kishan with bounce and seam. Sanju Samson, however, stamped his authority early, launching the final ball of the first over straight over the sightscreen for six. The real fireworks came in the second over as Samson whipped Ben Shikongo for two sixes, before lofting one over extra cover for four.

But Shikongo had the last laugh as Samson perished after going early on the flick against a slower ball and was caught at deep midwicket. Kishan maintained the tempo by driving and pulling JJ Smit for boundaries, before carting Shikongo and Trumpelmann for a boundary each. The sixth over was pure carnage, as Kishan tore into Smit by smashing four sixes in five balls – from downtown to long leg – and reached his fifty in just 20 balls with a swivel-pull going for four.

That stunning show of strokeplay meant India's Power-play tally of 86/1 is the highest total in the six-over phase in this competition. After India brought up their hundred in 6.5 overs, Namibia's fightback began when Erasmus had Kishan mistiming a pull to deep mid-wicket.

Sri Lanka crush Oman for second victory

Sri Lanka batsmen Kusal Mendis, Pavan Rathnayake and Dasun Shanaka cracked half-centuries as the 2014 champions continued to build momentum in the Twenty20 World Cup with a 105-run win over Oman in Pallekele on Thursday.

Mendis (61) and Rathnayake (60) stitched together a 94-run partnership for the third wicket after Sri Lanka were asked to bat, and skipper Shanaka provided the late flourish with a 19-ball 50 to take his side to 225-5 in 20 overs.

"We're very pleased about the way we batted today," Shanaka said in his post-match interview.

"We used the conditions really well. Pavan and Kusal planned the innings really well, and helped myself and Kamindu Mendis to provide the finishing touches. I'm really happy with the batting and also with the bowling."

Shanaka's knock contained five huge sixes and two fours and eclipsed his Sri Lankan record of a 20-ball 50 against India in Pune three years ago, but he was caught in the deep off the bowling of Jiten Ramanandi after reaching the milestone.

Players exchange handshakes after Sri Lanka defeated Oman by 105 runs at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Pallekele, on Thursday

Sri Lanka
225/5
(20)

Oman
120/9
(20)

SRI LANKA TAKE QUICK WICKETS

Kamindu then took them to a commanding total with a seven-ball 19 after hitting two sixes.

Playing without key spinner Wanindu Hasaranga, who was ruled out of the tournament with a hamstring injury sustained in their Group B victory over Ireland, Sri Lanka struck timely blows and never let Oman settle, restricting them to 120-9 in 20 overs.

Wasim Ali gave Oman hope with a breezy 27 alongside Mohammad Nadeem, who hit an unbeaten 53, but with wickets falling quickly at the other end there was no way back and they crashed to their second defeat after losing to Zimbabwe.

Dushmantha Chameera (2-19) and Maheesh Theekshana (2-11) led the way, while Hasaranga's replacement Dushan Hemantha took 1-45 for table-toppers Sri Lanka, who will take on Australia at the same venue on Monday.

"It's very hard to replace someone like Wanindu because he's a champion bowler," Shanaka said. **–Reuters**

Clinical Italy trounce Nepal

Italy trounced Nepal by 10 wickets to record a historic first-ever win in the men's T20 World Cup, producing a clinical show in only the second match of their maiden appearance in the competition, here on Thursday. After their spinners ruled the roost to bowl Nepal out for a paltry 123, brothers Anthony Mosca (62 not out) and Justin Mosca (60 not out) put on a ruthless unbeaten opening stand to crush the Rhinos, who failed to live up to the expectations.

Chasing 124, Italy knocked off the runs with 7.2 overs to spare.

Younger of the two, Justin smashed three sixes and five fours to make 60 not out off 44 balls, while Anthony too cashed in on a deflated Nepal bowlers, clobbering six sixes and three fours to score 62 not out off only 32 balls. It was only the second match in T20 World Cup history for Italy, who had lost the tournament opener to Scotland by a massive 73 runs in Kolkata.

Nepal, who were touted favourites for this clash after their enormous effort against England at the same venue, cut a sorry figure.

None of their batters could find a way to counter Italy's accurate spin bowling and fielding, while they inexplicably held their best spinner Sandeep Lamichhane back for most of the powerplay.

By the time Lamichhane, who has featured in various T20 tournaments including the Indian Premier League, was introduced into the attack, Italian openers had knocked 58 runs off from the modest target.

Anthony smacked one over long-on in the first over to set the tone while Justin tore into Karan KC in the third, hammering two fours and a six, as Italy made a fiery start.

Italy's Anthony Mosca and Justin Mosca celebrate after winning against Nepal at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, on Thursday

Nepal
123
(19.3)

Italy
124
(12.4)

The Mosca brothers hammered a six each off Lalit Rajbanshi in the fourth over as Italy raised their half-century in no time.

The Italians cruised at almost 10 runs an over with Nepal failing to produce any opportunity whatsoever, much to the disappointment of their fans who once again had filled up the Wankhede Stadium's stands in large numbers.

Earlier, Ben Manenti (2/9) and Crishan Kalugamage (3/18) stifled Nepal batters in a remarkable display of spin bowling, as Italy bowled out their opponents for a low score.

Spinners continued to dominate the proceedings here as Italy showed admirable precision with their line and lengths, combined with some terrific fielding, which kept Nepal constantly under the pump. **–PTI**

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, Vijaya Ravishankar R/o No.66,67,68, Vishnu Building, House No 501, 5th Floor, 3rd Cross, Narayanappa Layout, Naganathapura, Electronic City Post BLR-560100. Changed My Name from Vijaya C Hanchinal to Vijaya Ravishankar to all further purposes. (Reference Date of Birth 30/10/1967).

I, Aparna Satyanarayan R/o No. 28/1, RAAGA. Flat 102, 14th A cross, Malleswaram, Bengaluru-560003. Changed My Name from Aparna Satyanarayana To Aparna Satyanarayan to all further purposes. (Reference Date of Birth 15/03/1981 & Passport No. N4401311).

I, P BHOOPAL @ BHOOPAL P, S/o Perumal, residing at No.H-68, 2nd A Main, 4th Cross, Nagappa Block, Bangalore-560021, have changed my name to P BHOOPALAN, vide affidavit dt: 12-02-2026 before notary Renuka .C, Bangalore.

I, Yashavantha Marula Siddappa R/o 150, 6th cross, 4th block, Class D employees Lyt, Andrahalli road, Bengaluru 560091 have changed my name to Yashvanth Marula Siddappa (Yashvanth M) I shall be called by this name for all purposes

I, Praveena Kumari Ranjith, W/o. Manish Kulshreshtha, R/o. #411, Sri Sai Royal Apartment, KC Halli Road, Kaveri Nagar, Blr-560068, have changed my name to PRAVEENA KUMARI vide affidavit Dt: 12/02/26 before Notary M. Rajendra, Blr.

Change of Name

We, Naveen Kumar S and Nirmala P, r/at No. 351, 6th Cross, Pragathipura, Kanakapura Main Road, BSK 2nd Stage, Bangalore 560070 have changed our minor daughter's name from Chethana N to Chaithaniya N for all purposes vide affidavit dt. 12.02.2026 sworn before Notary L Puttaraju, Bangalore.

I Chethan B R s/o Ramegowda H S Address #37, Attur layout, Bengaluru-560064. I changed names as Chetan B R s/o H S Ramegowda affidavit date 12/02/2026 Bengaluru.

I, Mrityunjay Vatsyan, Resident of C-216, Sravya's Flute 2, Chinnapanahalli Main Rd, Bangalore - 560037, have changed my name to Mrityunjay Vatshayan

I Manpreet Kaur W/O, Alok Singh R/o Flat 303 Bhavana Residency, 2a Cross Rd, Near Panchamukhi Ganesha Temple, Anjanappa Layout, Horamavu Banaswadi, Horamavu, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560043 have changed my name to Annu Singh .

I, CHANDRASHEKAR HERIANNA SHETTY #70, Shabari Nilaya, 8th Crs, Binny Layout 2nd Stg, Papareddy palya, Nagarbhavi 2nd Stg, B'lore.72. have changed to CHANDRA SHEKAR SHETTY Vide aff Dt.12/02/2026 sworn before Notary Devraja E.B'lore.

I, IMRAN KHAN residing at #218/1, 1st Floor, 2nd Main, 11th Cross, Agrahara Badavane, M S Nagar, Yelahanka, Bangalore – 560064. I have changed my name to IMRAN KHAN A vide affidavit dated 11/02/2026 sworn before notary H K Gopal Gowda B'lore

I, SHOBHA S, D/o Selvaraj J, resident at # 323, Priya Rakshu Nilaya, Inner Circle, Behind, Park View Clinic, Whitefield, Bengaluru – 560066, have changed my name as SHOBHA ROOPENDRA, vide affidavit dated 11.02.2026, sworn before notary Nijagunaradhya T.C, Bengaluru.

I, NATARAAJAN RAJASEKARAN Residing at No. C-103, HSR Trinity apartment, Bandepalya, Garvebhavipalya, Bengaluru-560068 have changed my minor son's name from BHAIRAV to N BHAIRAV vide affidavit dated 06-01-2026 before Notary Mallikarjunappa, Bangalore

I, KIRAN DARANESH, # 24,22nd CRS, Akshay Nagar 2nd Block, Ramamurthy Nagar. Bengaluru- 560016, have changed my minor Daughter Name from SAANVI KIRAN (Old Name) to SAANVI (New Name) vide affidavit dated: 12/2/2026 Before Notary K.V.Mani Bangalore.

I, LOHINI PRANESH D/o. T Pranesh Resident At No 319, 6th Cross Pakegowdapalya, Hesaraghatta, Sivepura Bengaluru- 560090 have changed my minor son's name from GYAN DEEPAK RANGASWAMY to GYAN GOWDA vide affidavit dt: 31.01.2026 sworn before Notary D Sarala Kumari, Bengaluru

I, DHRUV KAMLESHBHAI SHAH S/O KAMLESHBHAI UMAKANT SHAH aged about 35 years R/At Flat G1201,Shriram Luxor,G-block, Hennur Bagalur Main Road, Kannur, B'luru-560077 have changed my name to DHRUV SHAH vide affidavit dtd: 11/02/2026 sworn before notary Uday Kumar K,B'luru

I, JAGADISH KRISHNA PRASAD SOPPA S/O SOPPA VENKATABASAPPA aged about 49 years residing at No.118,Sattva,1st Main, M V Extension, Hosakote, Bengaluru Rural- 562114 wish to change my wife's name from SOPPA RASHMI (as printed in my passport) to RASHMI VENKATESHAPPA (as per her KYC documents) vide affidavit dtd: 11/02/2026 sworn before notary Uday Kumar K,B'luru.

I, PRATHIMA KUMARI M #70, Shabari Nilaya, 8th Crs, Binny Layout 2nd Stg, Papareddy palya, Nagarbhavi 2nd Stg, B'lore.72. have changed to PRATHIMA M Vide aff Dt. 12/02/2026 sworn before Notary Devraja E.B'lore.

I, Ruthendra Murali S/o K Murali R/o H.No 17, 1st Floor, Annaiyappa Garden,7th D cross, Neelasandra, Bangalore - 560047. have changed my name to Ruthend Santos.

I, Vimala Patel W/O, Shivji Patel R/o No 48, Channasandra Colony, Kengeri-uttarahalli Main Road, Bengaluru-98 have changed my name to Vimalaben Patel for all purposes.

I, Bharathi D W/o M V Nadeesha R/o No Managanahalli Bidadi Hobli Hosur Ramanagar - 562109 have changed my name to Bharathi For All Purposes.

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Ph.: 080-23461222, 080-23462660, M :- 9880725855/9880725851/8951829577
E-mail: blr@vikramtravels.in, vikramblr@vikramtravels.in, Web: WWW.Vikramtravels.in

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READ ALOUD

New study shows reading to your kids between 6-8 years improves their social skills

In 2024, 51% of families read aloud to their very young children, while 37% read aloud to their kids between the ages of 6 and 8 years old.

Some parents have said they stop reading aloud to their school-age children because their kids can read on their own.

I'm a neuroscientist with four children, and I wondered whether children might be losing more than just the pleasure of listening to books read aloud. In particular, I wondered whether it affected their empathy and creativity.

A simple idea from the literature

I have studied and written about empathy and creativity as part of my personal effort to better understand how to be a good parent. I have found that empathy and creativity aren't talents you're born with or without. They are skills that respond to practice, just like learning to play piano.

But my children weren't being taught either empathy or creativity in elementary school. And the data showed that young people's empathy and creativity may have dropped over the past few decades.

Empathy isn't just about being nice. It's a superpower that helps children predict behavior and navigate social situations safely. It makes them better at reading faces and emotional cues.

And creativity is essential for self-control and problem-solving. It's much easier to regulate your behavior if you can imagine multiple solutions to a problem instead of fixating on the one thing you're not supposed to do.

About 10 years ago, I started making some changes at home to ensure that my children got these skills.

Setting aside 15 minutes at night was sometimes the only one-on-one time I had with each kid, with bedtimes of 7:30, 7:45, 8:00 and 8:15 p.m. It was precious to me. I wondered whether using conflicts in bedtime stories as teachable moments would help them develop more empathy for others and boost their creativity.

I wrote in 2016 about how I think my children became more empathetic when we paused at times during a book to ask: "How do you think this character feels?" and "What would you do?"

But no one had tested this experiment on a broader scale.

Testing the idea

Beginning in 2017, four colleagues and I recruited 38 families in central Virginia with children ages 6 to 8, which is an age when kids are navigating social relationships and experiencing intense brain development. All of the children in our study were somewhat independent beginning readers or they could read independently. In our study, caregivers read one storybook nightly for two weeks.

I chose seven illustrated books: "The Tooth Fairy Wars," "Library Lion," "A Letter for Leo," "Stuck with the Blooz," "Cub's Big World," "Nugget and Fang" and "A New Friend for Marmalade." There was nothing special about these books except that they all contained some sort of social conflict – and my kids gave them a thumbs-up.

They were about, among other characters, a polar bear cub who becomes separated from his mother in the snow, and a boy who hid his teeth from the tooth fairy.

Half the families in our study read a book each night straight through without pausing. The other half paused at one conflict point per story to ask two reflection questions. For example, when the tooth fairy stole the tooth Nathan desperately wanted to keep, they asked, "How would you feel if you were Nathan?" If the child answered, parents just listened. If not, they waited 30 seconds before continuing.

Before and after two weeks, we tested children's empathetic ability to understand what others might be thinking and how they are feeling. We also tested creativity using the alternative uses task, which asked kids to generate creative ideas, such as thinking of unusual uses for a paper clip or listing things with wheels.

A boost in empathy either way

After just 14 bedtimes with books, we found – as our 2026 research shows – that children whose parents paused for questions got better at understanding others' perspectives. But so did children whose parents just read straight through.

We found that what scientists call cognitive and overall empathy improved significantly in both groups between children's initial visit and our follow-up visit two weeks after they read the books for a week.

This may be because it is easier to quickly develop cognitive empathy – meaning when you put yourself in someone else's shoes – as compared to developing emotional empathy, or feeling what others feel. Emotional empathy involves different brain regions and likely requires longer to change deeply rooted emotional processing patterns.

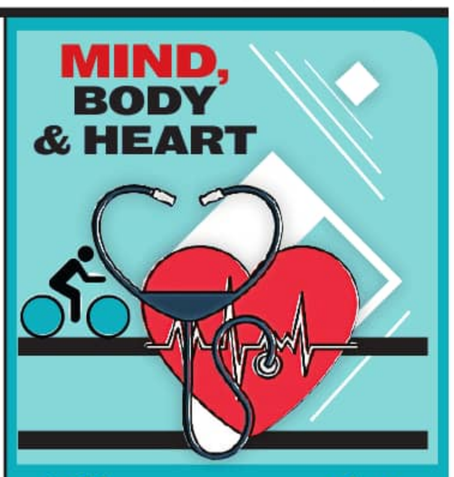
A creative approach

After two weeks of bedtime reading, children in both groups got better at creative thinking. We used a standard creativity test that measures the number and the originality of responses when children were asked to think of uses for everyday objects. For example, if asked about a brick, a common answer would be to build a wall, while a more original response might be to grind it up to make red chalk.

But the children whose parents paused for questions generated significantly more ideas overall.

We also noticed that the younger kids came up with more original ideas than the older ones. This matches other research showing that creativity may fade as children grow up and they prioritise fitting in with others more than thinking differently.

(Erin Clabough, University of Virginia, The Conversation)



All you need to know about...

Tips to text BAE

Inject Humour
Laughter is the best way to someone's heart. Share jokes, or playful banter to keep the conversation light and entertaining. Just be mindful of their sense of humour and avoid offensive jokes.

Compliment Sincerely
Genuine compliments never fail to make someone feel special. Notice something unique about them and compliment it. Whether it's their smile, sense of style, or intelligence, a heartfelt compliment will surely make their day.

Be Flirtatious, Not Creepy
There's a fine line between being flirty and coming off as creepy. Avoid overly sexual or suggestive messages, especially if you're still getting to know each other. Keep it classy and respectful.

Show Interest
Ask open-ended questions to show genuine interest in their life, passions, and aspirations. Listen attentively to their responses and use them as opportunities to deepen your connection.

Playful Teasing
A little teasing can add spice to your conversation and create a playful dynamic between you two. Just make sure it's light-hearted and never crosses into mean-spirited territory.

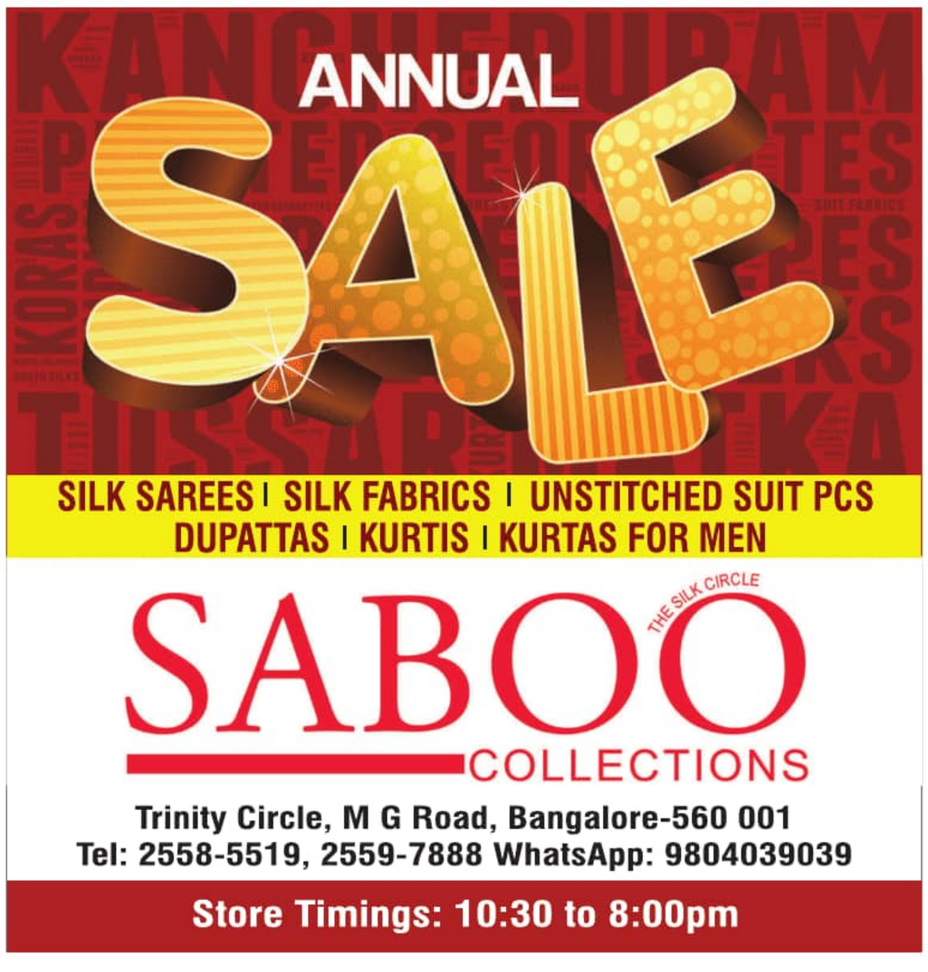
Keep the Momentum Going
Don't let the conversation fizzle out. Keep the momentum going by sharing interesting stories, asking follow-up questions, or even suggesting future plans together.

Know When to End
Ending the conversation on a high note leaves them wanting more. Know when it's the right time to wrap up the conversation gracefully, but always leave the door open for future interactions.

Be Yourself
Above all, be authentic and true to yourself. Your bae will appreciate your genuine personality more than any cheesy pick-up lines or contrived behaviour.

—Femina

GET NOTICED TIMES interact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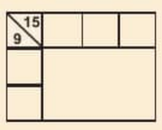
SOLVE IT IN A MINUTE

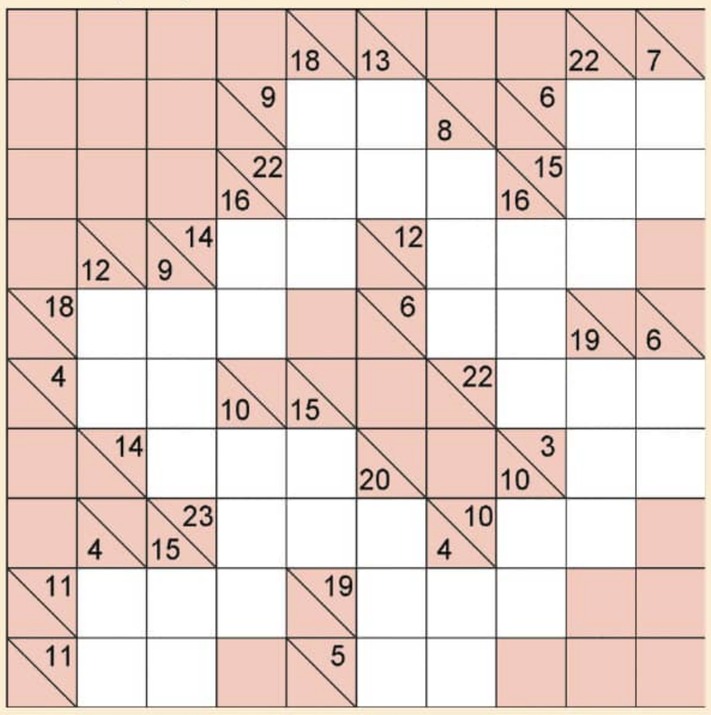
Diameter of a sphere is decrease by 20%. By what per cent does its curved surface area decrease?

Kakuro

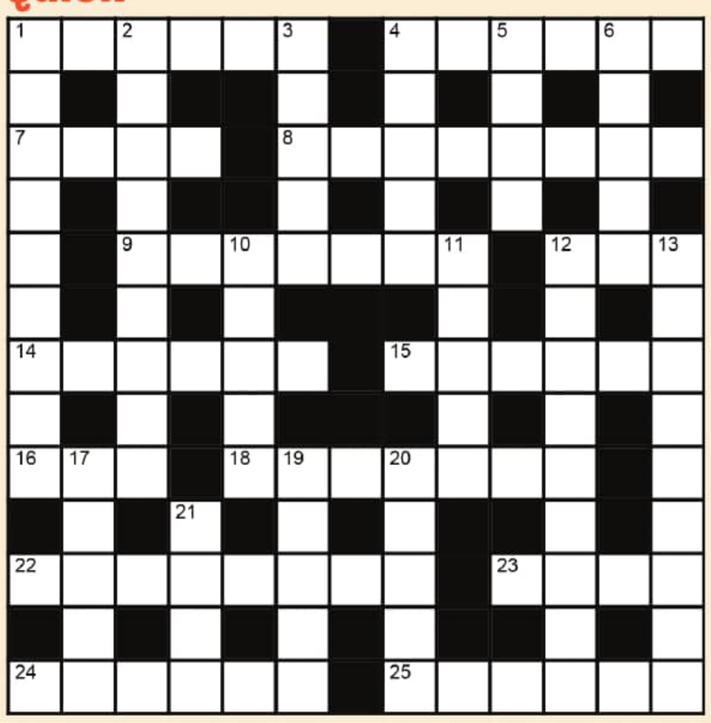
The numbers in the grey squares refer to the sums of the digits that you must fill into the empty spaces directly below or to the right of the grey square containing the number. For instance, in the given example, the 3 boxes horizontally next to 15 must contain 3 digits that add up to 15, whereas for 9, it is the 2 boxes placed vertically under it that must add up to 9. No zeros are used here, only the digits 1 through 9.



Note: A digit cannot appear more than once in any particular digit combination. For instance, in the example, we cannot have the combination of 4+7+4 for 15.



Quick



ACROSS

1 Fernando of F1 (6)
4 Ministers of the church (6)
7 Christmas (4)
8 Duplicitous (3-5)
9 Theatre at Rajaji Nagar (7)
12 Rowing device (3)
14 Astronaut: Kalpana ___ (6)
15 Lack of enthusiasm (6)
16 What we Indians eat almost everyday? (3)
18 Naked Face author Sidney ___ (7)
22 Leftover; remaining (8)
23 Rider's game (4)
24 Counsel or opinion (6)
25 Twist or contort in pain (6)

DOWN

1 Declared (9)
2 Everybody, none excluded? (3,3,3)
3 External (5)
4 Joker or jester (5)
5 Dash or zest; verve (4)
6 Ms Garbo of Hollywood (5)
10 Units of electric potential (5)
11 Stood in awe (5)
12 Obviously and most clearly? (3,3,3)
13 See a __ __ _ _ : start to feel more optimistic about? (3,2,4)
17 Correct or reform (5)
19 Dwelling (5)
20 Popular TV drama of the '80s (2,3)
21 Stereo (2-2)

Quoteuncode

This puzzle is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that Q equals C, it will equal C throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

Today's CLUE: X EQUALS L

QDTJM ZY KXX QDC NCKIQH RQTXX XCYQ KBZIJG HZI KJG NC DKWWH.

Linemaro

You're so sweet that you put Hershey's out of business

Mindchow

Sometimes it's ok if the only thing you did today was breathe

Joke of the day

Why can't you hear a pterodactyl pee? Because the 'p' is silent

Loop

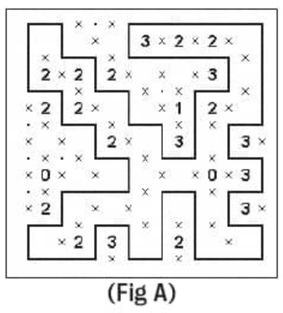
Rules

» Connect adjacent dots with vertical or horizontal lines, creating a single loop (Fig A). » Crossovers or branches are not allowed (As shown by dotted lines in Fig B). » Numbers in the puzzle indicate the number of lines that should surround it, while empty cells may be surrounded by any number of lines. » You can't draw lines around zeros. » Each puzzle has just one unique solution.

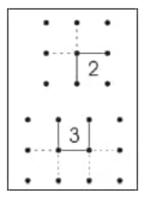
How to begin:

Example (Fig A) – Begin with the zero next to 3. Since no lines can be drawn around zero, mark crosses around it, as shown. Now there is a cross in one space around 3. So we know the three lines of 3 can only be drawn in the remaining three spaces. Next, these lines can only be extended in one direction each. Continue, using the same logic.

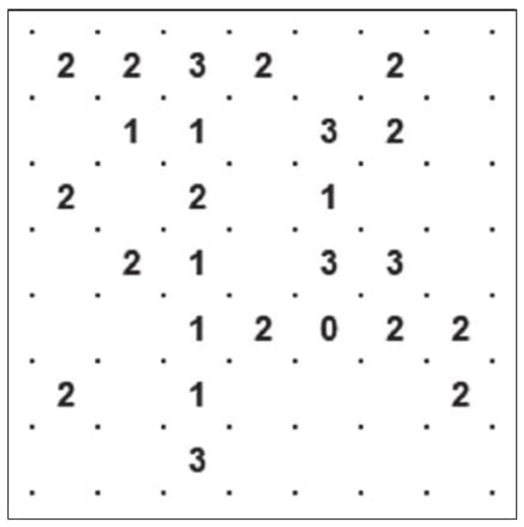
Hints: Keep eliminating possibilities by marking crosses in spaces between dots where a line isn't possible, i.e., if you have already completed required lines or where a line extension may create a branch or cause a dead-end (Fig B)



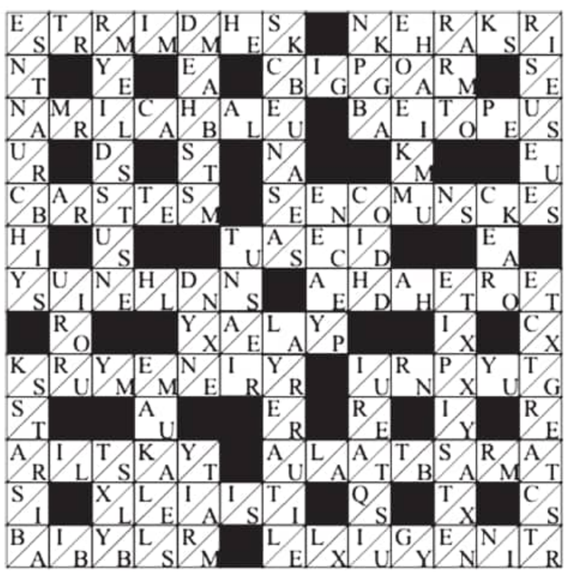
(Fig A)



(Fig B) Not Allowed



Strikeout



This crossword has no clues and the answer is there waiting for you. All you have to do is find it in each square. You have a choice of two letters, one of which you must strike out. If you choose correctly, you will be left with a grid that contains real words.

Fast five

How long do you think it will take you to unscramble the ten words shown below and fit them correctly into the grid in the order given one letter has already been entered to get you started? on your marks, get set...

1	2	3	4	5
6				
7				
8		G		
9				

ACROSS

1 Moral; 6 Are ZU; 7 Song G; 8 Tigon; 9 Slice

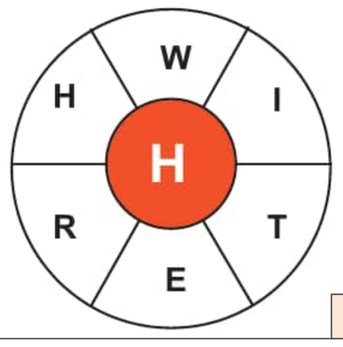
DOWN

1 Gamic; 2 NE Zoo; 3 In lug; 4 Largo; 5 Tress

Mensapuzzle

Which letter replaces the blank and completes the third wheel?

Bull's eye



How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown? Every word must contain the central letter. There should be one seven-letter word. British English Dictionary is used as a reference.

10 Average; **11** Good; **13** Outstanding

SudokuChallenge

	5		3		1		4	
9	4						6	7
1				4				5
	3			8			1	
			2		5			
	9			6			2	
4				1				8
5	2						9	3
	6		9		2		7	

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from one to nine must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Gofigure

Place the four numbers in the first, third, fifth, and seventh boxes and whatever operators you care to use in the second, fourth, and sixth boxes in the correct order to get the answer. Use the numbers only once.

Easy = 3

4 6 8 9

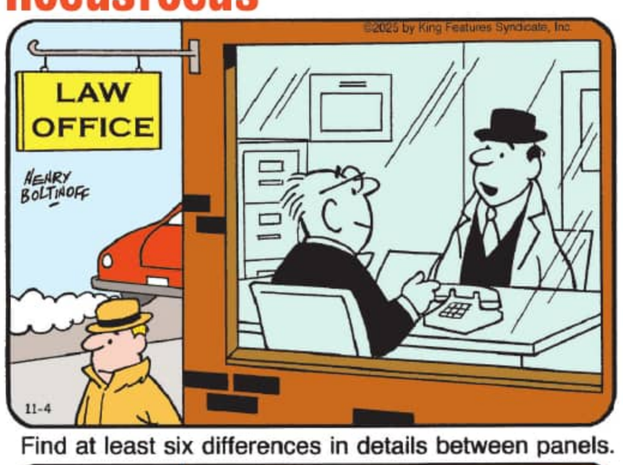
Medium = 10

3 3 7 9

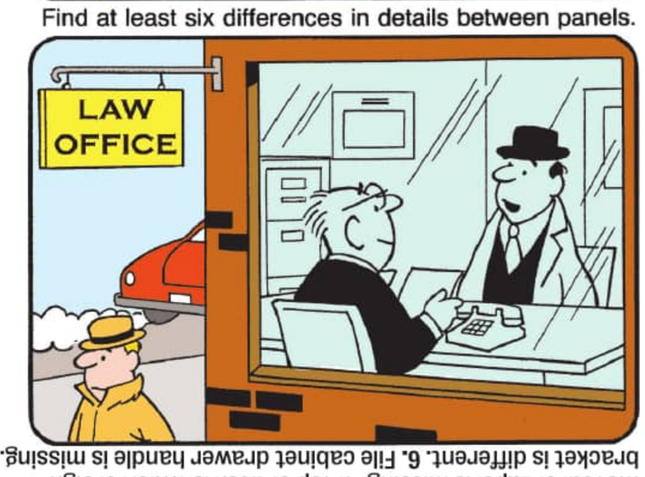
Hard = 15

2 4 6 7

Hocusfocus



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



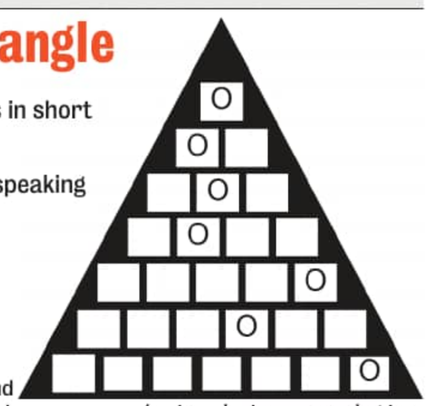
Differences: 1. Back of chair is not as wide. 2. Man is moved. 3. Lapel is missing. 4. Top of desk is wider. 5. Sign bracket is different. 6. File cabinet drawer handle is missing.

Riddler

Can you identify the following songs and their artists? 1) Refrain from halting, the first person, immediately. by Female monarch. 2) Multiple timepieces. by Low temperature, stage production. 3) Unbleached, natural sweetener. by Perpetual motion of small rock.

Alpha triangle

1 Circular letter
2 Football faux pas in short
3 Record events
4 Objective
5 Slow -musically speaking
6 In abundance
7 Musically brisk

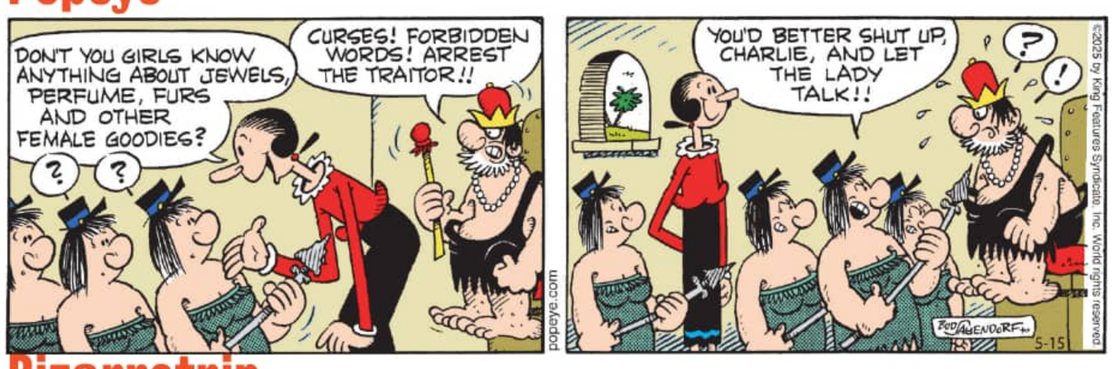


Beginning at the top move towards the bottom seven-letter word by adding a letter at each step and rearranging. A correct and different word must be made at each step answering to the clue given.

DIFFICULT TO SOLVE? FIND THESE SOLUTIONS ON THE NEXT PAGE »

COMICS

Popeye


DON'T YOU GIRLS KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT JEWELS, PERFUME, FURS AND OTHER FEMALE GOODIES?
CURSES! FORBIDDEN WORDS! ARREST THE TRAITOR!!
YOU'D BETTER SHUT UP, CHARLIE, AND LET THE LADY TALK!!
popeye.com
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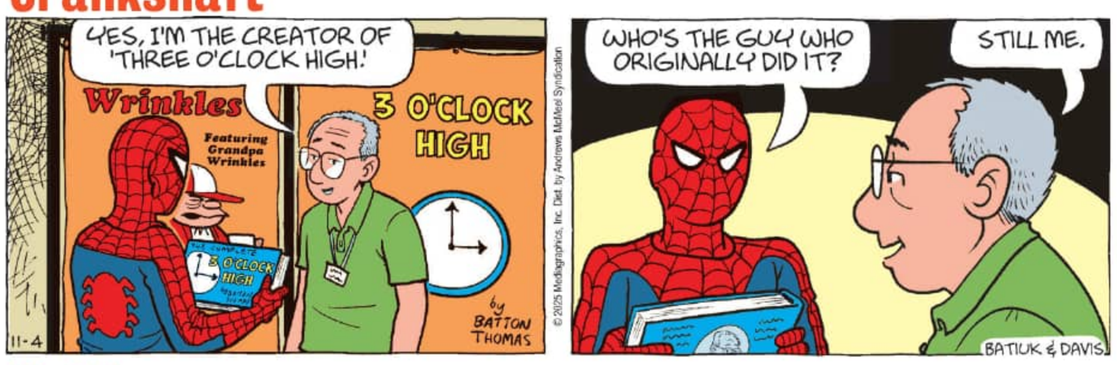
Bizarrotrip

Diamond Lil

Hart of the city

DID YOU MEAN TO SEND ME A CHAIN LETTER AT LIKE 11 P.M. LAST NIGHT?
YES! I THOUGHT I HAD FINISHED ALL THE LETTERS, BUT THEN I GOT ANOTHER ONE AT THE END OF SCHOOL! THEN I LOOKED IT UP, AND THE INTERNET SAID I COULD TEXT THE LETTERS AND IT WOULD STILL WORK EVEN IF I DIDN'T WRITE IT BY HAND!
ISN'T THAT GREAT?!
NO.
205
HEART OF THE CITY © 2025 ANDREWS MCMEEL
GOCOMICS.COM/HEARTOFTHECITY

Crankshaft


YES, I'M THE CREATOR OF 'THREE O'CLOCK HIGH.'
Wrinkles
Featuring Grandpa Wrinkles
3 O'CLOCK HIGH
by BATTON THOMAS
11-4
WHO'S THE GUY WHO ORIGINALLY DID IT?
STILL ME.
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Mutts

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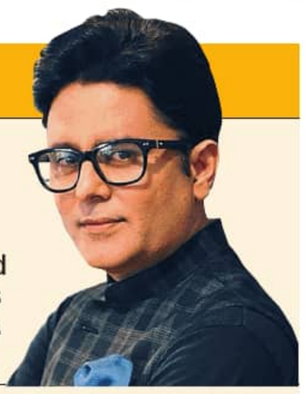
"RILEY"
AFTER A WHILE, BEING KEPT IN A CAGE CAN MAKE YOU DO STRANGE THINGS.
mutts.com
BARK BARK BARK BARK BARK
THAT'S SO NOT ME.
11-4

WRITTEN IN THE STARS

DR SUNDEEP KOCHAR



If it's your birthday today

Saturn's move today marks a year of rebuilding your foundations. Career discipline leads to a significant promotion or new venture. Romance deepens as you build a future together with your partner. Domestic projects completed now bring long-term satisfaction. Travel to mountains or quiet retreats offers clarity. Wise financial choices in the spring secure your comfort for the winter.

Aries Mar 21 – Apr 20

Your business is set for success today, potentially bringing a helpful new colleague. Short trips for family celebrations bring joy. Meditation will provide you with beautiful clarity and spiritual reflection.

Taurus Apr 21 – May 20

Your excellent organisational skills shine as you revamp your work space today. You will enjoy a much deeper connection with your partner, and any family health concerns will finally be resolved.

Gemini May 21 – Jun 21

Delegate tasks today to manage your busy workload effectively. While work is intense, focusing on supporting your siblings with important matters will bring a sense of harmony to your family.

Cancer Jun 22 – July 23

Work proceeds smoothly today as your health improves and your colleagues show you higher esteem. Strengthening bonds with your siblings and parents brings a wonderful sense of peace and connection.

Leo Jul 24 – Aug 23

The business front looks very promising today with the arrival of new clients. Job seekers find great opportunities, and singles may meet a compatible match that brings much future happiness.

Virgo Aug 24 – Sep 23

Your strong network enhances your business success today. As family health issues resolve, your natural radiance attracts potential soulmates. Practicing yoga will help you maintain a beautiful sense of calm.

Libra Sep 24 – Oct 22

Assistance from your team helps you resolve work indecision today. A delightful surprise from your partner brings joy, while financial gains and solutions for your children's education create great peace.

Scorpio Oct 23 – Nov 22

Confiding in a friend helps you move past any worries today. Focusing on creative pursuits or higher education brings fulfilment. Enjoying quality time with your parents will strengthen your bonds.

Sagittarius Nov 23 – Dec 22

Mental peace flows through your workplace today, fostering harmony with your employees. Your creative approach drives business growth, and loved ones will understand and support your feelings with great care.

Capricorn Dec 23 – Jan 20

A positive mind set helps you resolve workplace issues today. By staying focused and keeping a close eye on your finances, you can turn any situation into a rewarding learning experience.

Aquarius Jan 21 – Feb 19

You will discover exciting new ideas for generating future income today. Exploring a newfound interest in sports brings vitality, and focusing on your children's health ensures a happy, energetic household.

Pisces Feb 20 – Mar 20

Significant positive changes are coming to your office today. By building a strong, supportive team and giving your spouse extra attention, you will transform any challenge into a profitable success.

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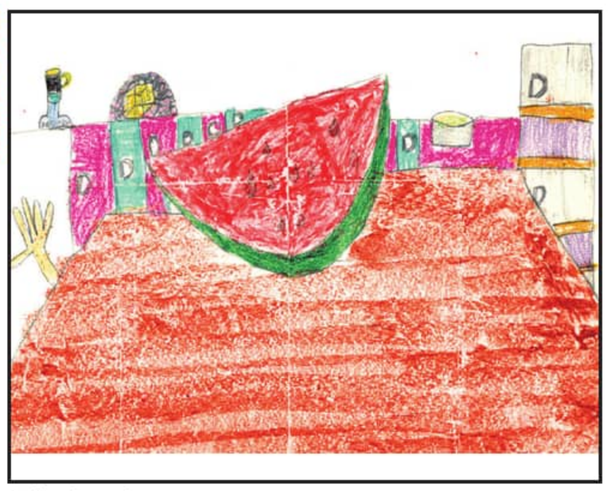
KIDZONE



Omkar, Bengaluru

Rakesh, Bengaluru

Kidzone, Bangalore Mirror, No. 74/2, Sanjana Plaza, 4th & 5th Floor, Elephant Rock Road, Jayanagar 3rd block, Bengaluru-560 011; Please send hard copies of your artwork in A4 size only.

SOLUTIONS

SOLVE IN 1M

[1-(1+5)]*[1-(1+5)] = 16+25
change =9+25 = 36%

BULL'S EYE

heir, hire, hither, their, threw, whet, whit, white, whither, WHITHER, with, wither, writhe

FAST FIVE

M	O	L	A	R
A	Z	U	R	E
G	O	N	G	S
I	N	G	O	T
C	E	I	L	S

RIDDLER

1) Don't stop me now by Queen,
2) Clocks by Coldplay,
3) Brown sugar by Rolling stones.

QUICK

A	D	V	I	C	E	W	R	I	T	H	E			
N		F		S		A		U		P				
R	E	S	I	D	U	A	L		P	O	L	O		
M		H		O		A		D			H			
D	A	L		S	H	E	L	D	O	N		F		
E		L		T		E		A			O			
C	H	A	W	L	A		A	P	A	T	H	Y		
N		D		O		A		U			A			
U	N	A	V	R	A	N	G	O	A	R				
O		A		E	W		N		T					
N	O	E	L	T	W	O	F	A	C	E	D			
N		N		U		L		L		R				
A	L	O	N	S	O	C	L	E	R	G	Y			

STRIKE OUT

A	B	Y	S	M		E	X	I	G	E	N	T		
I		L	E	A	S	T		Q		T		C		
R	I	S	K	Y		A	L	A	B	A	M	A		
T		A		R		R		I		R				
S	U	M	M	E	R	Y		I	N	P	U	T		
O		Y	E	L	P		X		X			X		
Y	I	E	L	D	S		A	D	H	E	R	E		
H		U		U	S	E	D		A					
C	A	S	E	S		E	N	O	U	N	C	E		
R	S	T		N		K		B	I	T	E	S		
A	M	I	A	B	L	E		C	I	G	A	R	S	
T	E		E		C	I	G	A	R		S			
S	T	R	I	D	E	S		K	H	A	K	I		

MENSA PUZZLE

Y. In each circle, starting with the top left letter, move 10 places forward to give the top right figure, and move another 10 places forward to give the bottom letter.

QUOTE UNCODE

Think of all the beauty still left around you and be happy.

SUDOKU

3	6	8	9	5	2	9	3	7
5	2	1	8	7	4	6	9	3
4	7	9	6	1	3	2	5	8
8	9	5	1	6	7	3	2	4
6	1	4	2	3	5	7	8	9
2	3	7	4	8	9	5	1	6
1	8	2	7	4	6	9	3	5
9	4	3	5	2	8	1	6	7
7	5	6	3	9	1	8	4	2

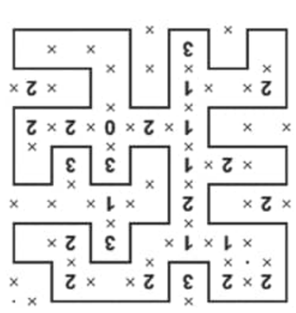
ALPHA TRIANGLE

0 , OG, Log, Goal, Large, Galore, Allegro.

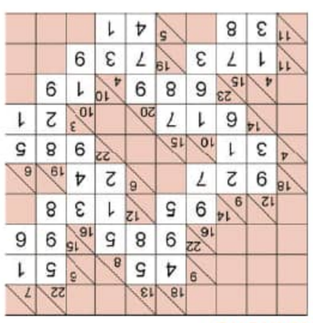
GO FIGURE

6 - 8 - 4 + 9 = 3
Easy
9 + 7 - 3 - 3 = 10
Medium
4 + 7 + 6 - 2 = 15
Hard

LOOP



KAKURO



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 # Five arrested in shooting
Gunshots fired at Rohit Shetty's Mumbai home early February 1; stray bullet hit gym glass panel, triggering major police investigation

Glam grit: Shanaya returns

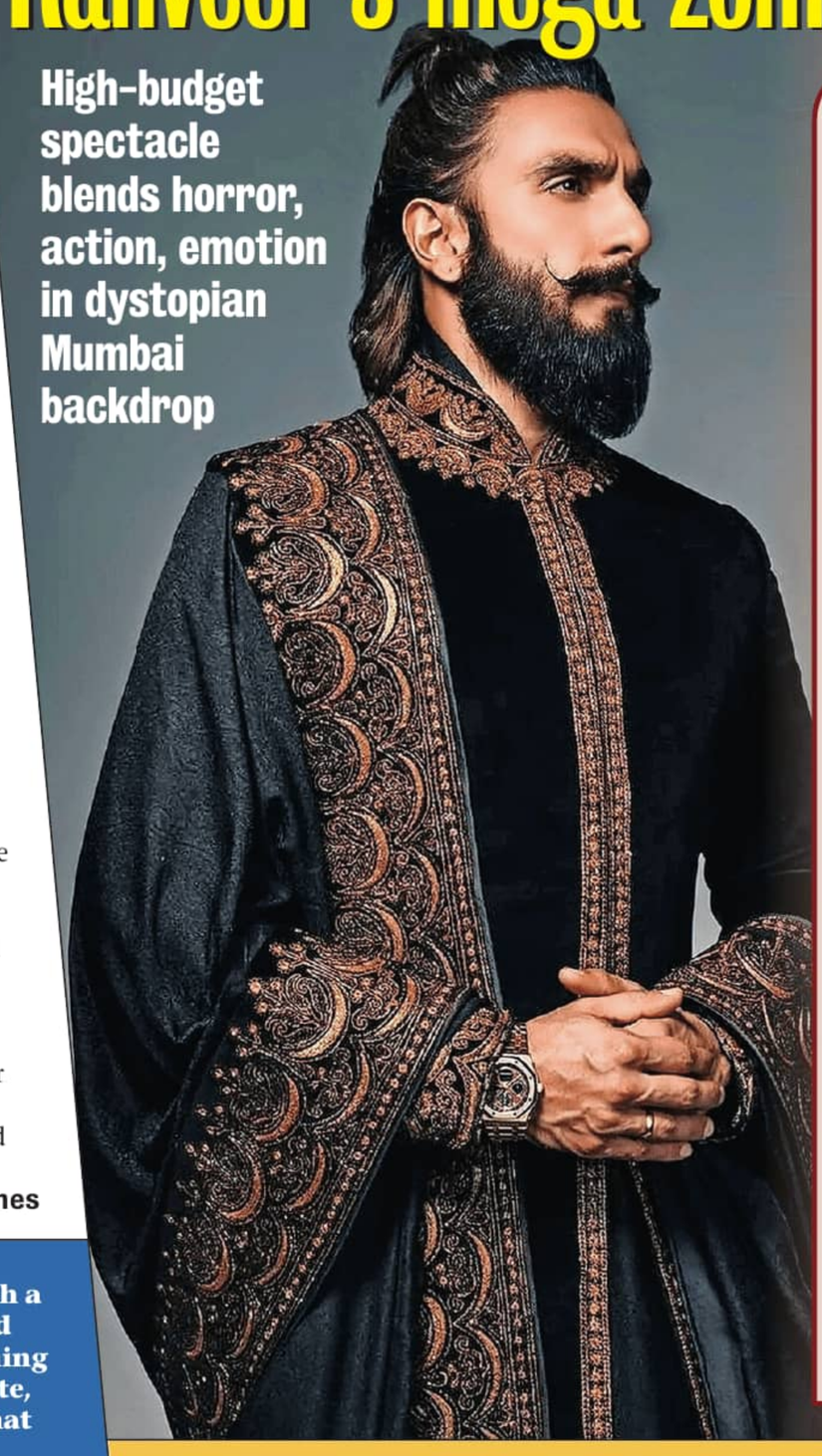
Actor Shanaya Kapoor says destiny led her to her second film, the survival thriller Tu Yaa Main, in which she stars opposite Adarsh Gourav as a social media influencer caught in a life-threatening situation.

Daughter of actors Sanjay Kapoor and Maheep Kapoor, Shanaya made her debut alongside Vikrant Massey in Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan. She credits casting director Mukesh Chhabra for giving her the opportunity to audition for Tu Yaa Main. "When I read the scenes, I found them super fun. It felt like destiny that I was there at the right moment and that Mukesh sir thought of me. The film is scheduled for theatrical release on February 13. To prepare for her role as Avani, Shanaya revisited survival thrillers like Jaws, Crawl and The Meg, and worked with acting coach Atul Mongia. She described Avani as having a sensual yet intimidating presence that makes her compelling. The film is produced by Aanand L Rai, Himanshu Sharma and Vinod Bhanushali.

—ETimes

Ranveer's mega zombie spectacle

High-budget spectacle blends horror, action, emotion in dystopian Mumbai backdrop



After the massive success of Dhurandhar, Bollywood star Ranveer Singh is set to headline one of the most ambitious and expensive films of his career, a zombie thriller titled Pralay. The film is reportedly being made on an estimated budget of around ₹300 crore, making it one of the costliest standalone projects Singh has taken on so far.

Directed by Jai Mehta, Pralay is a high-concept drama set during the COVID-19 pandemic, blending large-scale action, visual effects and deep human emotion against a backdrop of a zombie outbreak. The narrative centres on a family's struggle to survive in a dystopian version of Mumbai, and is being positioned as a potential game-changer for the zombie genre in Indian cinema.

This marks a significant power move in his career as he expands into production.

Shooting is expected to begin around May or June 2026, although an official announcement is yet to be made.

Industry observers note that while Dhurandhar was itself a high-budget spectacle, its expenditure was split across two parts, whereas Pralay's ₹300 crore tag makes it Singh's most expensive single-film investment to date. The project's ambition and scale reflect a shift toward risk-taking and genre diversity in mainstream Bollywood cinema.

Pralay is being developed as a visually rich, concept-driven film that combines the thrills of the zombie genre with emotional stakes and strong storytelling, and is expected to draw significant attention ahead of its production start.

—ETimes

Goodbye, my darling Lisa

Veteran actor Boman Irani is grieving the loss of his beloved pet dog, Lisa, whom he described as the "most noble, gentle soul." Sharing a heartfelt note on social media, Irani posted cherished photographs and reflected on the joy, warmth and unconditional love Lisa brought into his family's life.

He affectionately called her "the most demanding, attention-seeking, pampered, prioritised, and mentioned-per-day dog that ever will be,"

adding that she deserved every bit of that love because she was "royal, noble and gentle" in spirit. He recalled how Lisa could instantly change the mood of a room — softening anger, easing sadness and silencing arguments with a single dignified bark. Her calming energy, he wrote, "repelled all that was evil and attracted all that was good." Concluding his message with "We will miss you, my darling Lisa," Irani captured the profound sense of loss he and his family now feel. Fans and fellow actors, including Anupam Kher and Dia Mirza, extended condolences, celebrating the special bond Lisa shared with Irani and his loved ones.

—ETimes

For parents, children & teachers

Harivarasanam Kanakapura, who worked as a co-director for 14 years, makes his debut as an independent director in Sandalwood with Maggi Pusthaka. He has adapted his own novel, Avani, for the screen. The film's unique selling point is its four-dimensional narration, weaving together stories inspired by true incidents.

The narrative stresses the importance of the girl child and condemns female foeticide. It underlines the value of motherhood and education while addressing digital addiction among children. The film portrays how excessive mobile phone use can affect young minds and even lead to health issues. It also mirrors the struggles of a poor family and comments on how authorities often act harshly toward the underprivileged. Another key message is that education is not the monopoly of any one community.

The story opens with a pregnant woman, played by Meghashree Kannadati, being thrown out of her house and giving birth to a baby girl. Huliyappa, portrayed by Mysuru Ramanand, rescues the infant and entrusts her to Bhagya, played by Raksha Gowda. Widowed and burdened by loans taken for her husband's medical treatment, Bhagya faces immense hardship.

MAGGI PUSTHAKA
3.0 RATING ★★★☆☆
- **DIRECTOR** Harivarasanam Kanakapura
- **ACTORS** Ranjan Kasargod, Ranvee Shekhar, Raksha Gowda, Mysore Ramanand, Meghasri
- **CERTIFICATION** U/A
- **Duration** 153 minutes

When online classes begin during the pandemic, Bhagya struggles to arrange a mobile phone for her daughter Avani, portrayed by Ranvee Shekhar, who dreams of higher education. Huliyappa also supports her efforts. The performances are sincere, especially Mohit as the caring brother who sacrifices his favourite meal for his sister. Despite a lengthy runtime and a few unnecessary scenes, the film delivers a meaningful message about digital addiction and the enduring power of books.

—Y Maheswara Reddy

Behind Dharma's broken deal

Industrialist Sanjiv Goenka has revealed that a proposed investment deal between his RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group (RPSG) and Karan Johar's Dharma Productions fell through over concerns regarding a legal clause in the agreement.

Goenka said his group was close to finalising a strategic partnership before Dharma signed a separate deal in late 2025 with Adar Poonawalla-led Serene Productions, which acquired a 50 per cent stake for about ₹1,000 crore.

Negotiations stalled after Johar raised objections to a "drag and tag" clause in the draft agreement. The provision allows majority shareholders to compel minority investors to join a sale, while enabling minority stakeholders to participate in majority-led sales. Goenka said he was unaware of its inclusion and impact.

Speaking on a podcast with Parthiv Neotia, Goenka called the episode a lesson in oversight, expressing regret over missing the Dharma opportunity.

—ETimes